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APPLICANTS: Salas et al.
SERIAL NO.: Not yet assigned GROUP NO.: Not yet assigned
FILING DATE: Herewith EXAMINER: Not yet assigned
TITLE: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CONTROLLING ACCESS TO A
PRODUCT

Box PATENT APPLICATION
Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Sir:

This Preliminary Amendment accompanies the filing of the continuation application identified above and is submitted in order to

- 1) amend the specification to refer to the corresponding parent application, U.S. Patent Application No. 09/116,558,
- 2) amend the originally-filed claims,
- 3) present additional claims, and
- 4) submit formal drawings that are identical to those filed and approved in the corresponding parent application.

Applicants respectfully request entry of this Preliminary Amendment prior to a substantive examination of the subject application.

REMARKS

Claims 1-23 were pending in the subject application. Upon entry of the present Amendment, claims 1-3, 5-11, 13-20, 22 are amended and new claims 24-50 are newly-added. Accordingly, claims 1-50 are pending. Support for the claim amendments and newly-added claims can be found throughout the specification, such as at page 3, lines 22-24; page 6, lines 4-11; page 26, line 5 to page 30, line 2. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that no new matter is introduced by the present Amendment and that all pending claims are in condition for allowance. Marked-up and clean copies of the claims and specification are enclosed. Also enclosed are the formal drawings for the subject application, which have already been approved in the parent application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the appropriate filing fee, excess claim fee, and any additional fees that may be due to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 20-0531.

Respectfully submitted,



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MARKED-UP SECTION OF SPECIFICATION

Cross-Reference to Related Applications

This application is a continuation of co-pending U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/116,558, filed July 15, 1998, which claims priority to and the benefit of co-pending U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/893,111, filed July 15, 1997.

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MARKED-UP VERSION OF AMENDED CLAIMS

1. (Amended) A method for controlling access to a product, the method comprising the steps of:
 - (a) receiving a request for a product from a requestor;
 - (b) generating, substantially at the time the request is received, a license string that controls access to the product; and
 - (c) transmitting the license string to the requestor.
2. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein step (a) comprises receiving a the request via a distributed communications network.
3. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein step (a) comprises:
~~— (a a) receiving a request for a product; and~~
~~— (a b) receiving payment information from the requestor.~~
5. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein step (b) comprises using a cryptographic process to generate a the license string that controls access to the product.
6. (Amended) The method of claim ~~1-5~~ wherein step ~~(b)~~ comprises using a the cryptographic process to ~~generates~~ a the license string by encoding a character text string, ~~the license string controlling access to the product when supplied by the requestor.~~
7. (Amended) The method of claim ~~1-5~~ wherein step ~~(b)~~ comprises using a the cryptographic process to ~~generates~~ a the license string, the license string being encoded

as an upper case alphanumeric string, ~~the characters in the text string excluding capital O, capital I, and numbers 0 and 1,~~ the license string controlling access to the product when supplied by the requestor.

8. (Amended) The method of claim ~~1-5~~ wherein ~~step (b) comprises using a~~ the cryptographic process to ~~generates a~~ the license string by encoding:
 - ~~the~~ a date of creation of the license string;
 - ~~the~~ a number of users enabled by the license string; and
 - ~~the~~ a type of license string created.
9. (Amended) The method of claim ~~8-5~~ wherein ~~step (b) further comprises including the~~ license string includes validation information ~~in the generated string.~~
10. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein ~~step (b) comprises generating, substantially at the time the request is received, a~~ the license string ~~that controls access to a single facility.~~
11. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein ~~step (b) comprises generating, substantially at the time the request is received, a~~ the license string ~~that controls access to multiple a plurality of facilities.~~
13. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the product functions for only a predetermined period of time ~~before the license string is entered~~ if the license string is not entered into the product.

14. (Amended) The method of claim 13 wherein the license string ~~extends the~~
~~predetermined period of time for which the product will function~~enables the product to
function beyond the predetermined period of time.
15. (Amended) A system for controlling access to a product, the system comprising:
an input unit receiving a request for a product from a requestor;
a license string generator in electrical communication with ~~said~~the input unit,
~~said~~the license string generator producing, substantially at the time a ~~a~~the request is
received, a license string that controls access to the product; and
an output unit coupled to the license string generator, the output unit
transmitting the license string to the requestor.
16. (Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein ~~said~~the input unit is in electrical
communication with a network and ~~said~~the input unit receives a ~~a~~the request for a ~~a~~the
product via the network.
17. (Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein ~~said~~the license string generator uses a
cryptographic engine to produce a ~~a~~the license string.
18. (Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein ~~said license string generator generates a~~the
license string controls ~~ing~~ access to a single facility.
19. (Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein ~~said license string generator generates a~~the
license string controls ~~ing~~ access to ~~multiple~~ a plurality of facilities.

20. (Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein ~~said~~ the output unit is in electrical communication with a network and ~~said~~ the output unit transmits the product and the associated-license string to the requestor via the network.
22. (Amended) An article of manufacture having computer-readable program means for electronically distributing a product, the computer-readable program means comprising:
- computer-readable program means for receiving a request for a product from a requestor;
 - computer-readable program means for generating, substantially at the time the request is received, a license string that enables the product when supplied by the requestor;
 - computer-readable program means for associating the license string with the product; and
 - computer-readable program means for transmitting the product and the associated license string to the requestor.

CLEAN COPY OF ALL PENDING CLAIMS

1. (Amended) A method for controlling access to a product, the method comprising the steps of:
 - (a) receiving a request for a product from a requestor;
 - (b) generating, substantially at the time the request is received, a license string that controls access to the product; and
 - (c) transmitting the license string to the requestor.
2. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein step (a) comprises receiving the request via a distributed communications network.
3. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein step (a) comprises receiving payment information from the requestor.
4. The method of claim 3 further comprising the step of verifying the received payment information.
5. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein step (b) comprises using a cryptographic process to generate the license string that controls access to the product.
6. (Amended) The method of claim 5 wherein the cryptographic process generates the license string by encoding a character text string.

7. (Amended) The method of claim 5 wherein the cryptographic process generates the license string, the license string being encoded as an upper case alphanumeric string excluding capital O, capital I, and numbers 0 and 1.
8. (Amended) The method of claim 5 wherein the cryptographic process generates the license string by encoding:
 - a date of creation of the license string;
 - a number of users enabled by the license string; and
 - a type of license string created.
9. (Amended) The method of claim 5 wherein the license string includes validation information.
10. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the license string controls access to a single facility.
11. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the license string controls access to a plurality of facilities.
12. The method of claim 1 wherein step (c) comprises transmitting the license string to the requestor via a distributed communications network.
13. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the product functions for only a predetermined period of time if the license string is not entered into the product.

14. (Amended) The method of claim 13 wherein the license string enables the product to function beyond the predetermined period of time.
15. (Amended) A system for controlling access to a product, the system comprising:
 - an input unit receiving a request for a product from a requestor;
 - a license string generator in electrical communication with the input unit, the license string generator producing, substantially at the time the request is received, a license string that controls access to the product; and
 - an output unit coupled to the license string generator, the output unit transmitting the license string to the requestor.
16. (Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein the input unit is in electrical communication with a network and the input unit receives the request for the product via the network.
17. (Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein the license string generator uses a cryptographic engine to produce the license string.
18. (Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein the license string controls access to a single facility.
19. (Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein the license string controls access to a plurality of facilities.

20. (Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein the output unit is in electrical communication with a network and the output unit transmits the product and the license string to the requestor via the network.
21. An article of manufacture having computer-readable program means embodied thereon, the computer-readable program means comprising the system of claim 15.
22. (Amended) An article of manufacture having computer-readable program means for electronically distributing a product, the computer-readable program means comprising:
- computer-readable program means for receiving a request for a product from a requestor;
 - computer-readable program means for generating, substantially at the time the request is received, a license string that enables the product when supplied by the requestor;
 - computer-readable program means for associating the license string with the product; and
 - computer-readable program means for transmitting the product and the associated license string to the requestor.
23. The article of manufacture of claim 22 further comprising computer-readable program means for receiving payment information from the requestor.

24. (New) A method of controlling access to a product, the method comprising the steps of:
- receiving a request to access a product from a requestor, the product providing access to information pertaining to at least one project;
- forming a license string that enables access to the information pertaining to the at least one project; and
- transmitting the license string to the requestor.
25. (New) The method of claim 24 wherein the request is received via a distributed communications network.
26. (New) The method of claim 24 wherein the request includes payment information associated with the requestor.
27. (New) The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of verifying the payment information.
28. (New) The method of claim 24 wherein a cryptographic process forms the license string.
29. (New) The method of claim 28 wherein the cryptographic process forms the license string by encoding a character text string.
30. (New) The method of claim 28 wherein the cryptographic process encodes the license string as an upper case alphanumeric string excluding capital O, capital I, and numbers 0 and 1.

31. (New) The method of claim 28 wherein the cryptographic process forms the license string by encoding:
 - a date of creation of the license string;
 - a number of users enabled by the license string; and
 - a type of license string created.
32. (New) The method of claim 28 wherein the license string includes validation information.
33. (New) The method of claim 24 wherein the license string is formed substantially at the time the request is received.
34. (New) The method of claim 24 wherein the license string enables access to information pertaining to a plurality of projects.
35. (New) The method of claim 24 wherein the license string is transmitted to the requestor via a distributed communications network.
36. (New) The method of claim 24 wherein the product functions for only a predetermined period of time if the license string is not entered into the product.
37. (New) The method of claim 36 wherein the license string enables the product to function beyond the predetermined period of time.
38. (New) The method of claim 24 wherein the information pertaining to the at least one project corresponds to a virtual workroom.

39. (New) The method of claim 38 wherein the virtual workroom provides access to files, data, and discussion information associated with the at least one project.
40. (New) The method of claim 38 wherein the virtual workroom corresponds to a collection of HTML pages.
41. (New) A system for controlling access to a product, the system comprising:
an input unit receiving a request to access a product from a requestor, the product providing access to information pertaining to at least one project;
a license string generator in electrical communication with the input unit, the license string generator forming a license string that enables access to the information pertaining to the at least one project; and
an output unit coupled to the license string generator, the output unit transmitting the license string to the requestor.
42. (New) The system of claim 41 wherein the input unit is in electrical communication with a network and the input unit receives the request via the network.
43. (New) The system of claim 41 wherein the license string generator uses a cryptographic engine to produce the license string.
44. (New) The system of claim 41 wherein the license string is formed substantially at the time the request is received.
45. (New) The system of claim 41 wherein the license string enables access to information pertaining to a plurality of projects.

46. (New) The system of claim 41 wherein the output unit is in electrical communication with a network and the output unit transmits the product and the license string to the requestor via the network.
47. (New) The system of claim 41 wherein the information pertaining to the at least one project corresponds to a virtual workroom.
48. (New) The system of claim 47 wherein the virtual workroom provides access to files, data, and discussion information associated with the at least one project.
49. (New) The system of claim 47 wherein the virtual workroom corresponds to a collection of HTML pages.
50. (New) An article of manufacture having computer-readable program means embodied thereon, the computer-readable program means comprising the system of claim 41.